

# **PRESS** Release

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A White Paper:

VIETNAM: SOME NEGLECTED ASPECTS  
OF THE HISTORICAL RECORD

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This paper is being issued by the Republican Committee on Planning and Research of the House of Representatives to recall facts which, while well known to specialists, have become obscured or forgotten in the mind of the public.

In the serious crisis in which the United States is now involved, support of the objective of stopping Communist aggression and safeguarding the freedom and independence of South Vietnam is the duty of all responsible people. Support of the President, who alone can lead the nation to this objective, is a duty as long as the President holds to the objective and uses the means needed to attain it.

Support does not preclude examination of history to see how the nation arrived at the present crisis and to evaluate past policy. That is the function of this report. A clear perspective on the past is a first requisite to making the right decisions in the future.

(Note: Because of an error in pagination, there is no Page 26 in this report.)

VIET NAM

SOME NEGLECTED ASPECTS OF THE HISTORICAL RECORD

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The involvement of the United States in Vietnam after World War II began with the decision of the Truman Administration to provide economic and military aid in May 1950.

A fragile peace was brought to Vietnam by the Geneva Agreements of 1954, partitioning Vietnam into a Communist north and a non-Communist south. Contrary to most expectations, South Vietnam survived. Indeed, with generous aid from the United States, it achieved what the late President John F. Kennedy called "a near miracle" between 1954 and 1960. Secretary McNamara spoke of the history of South Vietnam in this period as "a success story."

When President Eisenhower left office, there was no crisis in South Vietnam. There were problems arising, particularly from a renewal of sporadic guerilla activity by the Viet Cong. The dimensions of the problems then compared with the present situation can be gauged from these facts:

- (1) In 1960, there were fewer than 700 American military personnel stationed in South Vietnam to train South Vietnamese; today, 125,000 troops are there or on their way there to fight.
- (2) In 1960, there were 5000-6000 Viet Cong regulars in South Vietnam; today there are 70,000 regulars and 100,000 other Viet Cong troops.
- (3) In 1960, the cost of aiding South Vietnam to the United States was \$250 million - 72 per cent of it economic aid; As of April 26, 1965, it was 1.5 billion dollars on an annual basis, of which 25 per cent was economic aid.

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- (4) In 1960, 2000 South Vietnamese were killed or kidnapped by the Viet Cong; in 1964, 11,349 were the victims of a similar fate.
- (5) In 1960, exports from South Vietnam (a good barometer of economic activity) amounted to \$86 million; in 1964, exports had dropped to \$48 million.
- (6) In 1960, and in 1962, more than 80 per cent of the land area of South Vietnam was under the control of the South Vietnamese government; today, it is 30 per cent or less.
- (7) In 1960, two Americans had been killed by Viet Cong action; as of August 19, 1965, 561 have been killed and more than 3000 have been wounded, taken prisoner, or are missing.

The policy of the Democratic Administration has too often been uncertain, providing a basis for miscalculation by the Communists. Policy has been altered abruptly. Conflicting statements have been issued. Deeds have not matched words. Among the specific features of policy subject to this criticism have been the whole handling of the problem of Laos, the reversal of the position of the United States toward the Diem regime, the cover-up of the gravity of the desperate dangers of the situation in Vietnam, President Johnson's campaign oratory of 1964, and the progressive dilution of official statements of the Nation's objective in Vietnam. The most generous recognition of the need for flexibility and change of policy in some circumstances cannot justify making a habit of inconstancy.

Both because it invites miscalculation and because it confuses the American public, the Administration's lack of candor about the situation in Vietnam and about its own plans and actions is regrettable.

There should be no doubt that the American people will support the Administration in the actions needed to establish the freedom and the security of South Vietnam. There will be greater national unity when the Administration abandons the defects of substance and style noted in this report.

# I. THE TRUMAN ADMINISTRATION

The involvement of the United States in the struggle in Vietnam that followed World War II dates from the Truman Administration. It began with a decision announced by Secretary Acheson on May 8, 1950 to send "economic and military equipment to the Associated States of Indochina and to France in order to assist them in restoring stability and permitting these states to pursue their peaceful and democratic development. "

The decision to aid the French in Vietnam was taken as part of a tardy and somewhat inconsistent policy of containment which the Truman Administration put together after the fall of China to the Communists.

Aid to Vietnam under that policy implied no commitment to put more than arms and equipment and dollars into the conflict. This was clear from the authoritative statement of the Truman Administration's Asiatic policy given by Secretary Acheson on January 12, 1950. The mild and equivocal warning which Mr. Acheson gave to the Asiatic aggressors in that speech drew a line in the Pacific Ocean marking the outermost limits of the "defense perimeter" of the United States. The islands east of that line were said to be vital to the security of this country and, Mr. Acheson implied, would be defended by the United States by force. The Asiatic mainland, including Indochina (and Korea) lay beyond the defense perimeter where, according to Secretary Acheson, an attack should be met by action of the United Nations.

Although the policy enunciated in January was reversed in Korea six months later by the commitment of American forces in warfare, the Truman Administration never considered providing manpower in Indochina. In fact, it twice rebuffed appeals from the French for a pledge of air and naval support in the event that the Chinese Com-

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munists provided manpower for the conflict in Indochina. In response to such appeals, the Government of the United States said only that Chinese Communist aggression in Southeast Asia "would require the most urgent and earnest consideration by the United Nations."

Involvement in a costly war in Korea did not, however, prevent the Truman Administration from supplying substantial aid to save Indochina from Communist conquest. Approximately \$375 million of military and economic assistance was channeled to Southeast Asia by the American taxpayer through fiscal year 1953.

In August of 1950, an American Military Assistance Advisory Group of 35 personnel was sent to Indochina to advise on the use of American equipment. Despite this assistance, the situation of the French and their native forces continued to deteriorate. When President Truman left the White House, all of Vietnam above the 17th parallel except Hanoi, a narrow corridor connecting to a coastal strip around Haiphong and a part of the northeastern T'ai Highlands was under control of the Communist Viet Minh. In addition, Viet Minh forces were in effective control of large areas south of the 17th parallel - the central highlands and the tip of the Camau peninsula, the southernmost part of the country.

## II. THE EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION

President Eisenhower continued the program of military and economic aid to France and the Associated States of Indochina at levels set by the previous Administration until the fall of 1953. In September 1953, increased aid of \$385 million through 1954 was promised by the United States after two modifications of French policy had been decided on - both of them measures designed to avert impending disaster.

Under the twin pressures of military reverses in Indochina and the prodding of the United States, France agreed on July 3, 1953, to take steps "to complete the independence and sovereignty of the Associated States ... within the French Union." Although France, in 1949, by the Elysee Agreement had conferred a measure of self-government on the Associated States of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, too little was given to satisfy the thirst for independence. Secretary Dulles, hailing the belated French decision of July 1953, said, "...the peoples of these countries needed something of their own for which to fight." There was hope that the war, even at this late date, could be cleansed of the appearance of colonialism and would no longer seem to Asiatics to be an effort by France to hold on to her Asiatic possessions.

The second significant decision was incorporated in the Navarre Plan - a plan of aggressive military action with increased French and native forces.

With these two conditions realized - a promise of independence for Indochina and the decision to intensify the military effort - the Eisenhower Administration increased American assistance.

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After the conclusion of the Korean armistice on July 27, 1953, keeping the Chinese Communists from active military participation in Indochina became one of the concerns of American policymakers. On the day of the armistice, the sixteen members of the United Nations that had helped to defend South Korea issued a joint warning against Chinese Communist action in Southeast Asia. On September 2, Secretary Dulles warned that such aggression in Indochina "could not occur without grave consequences which might not be confined to Indochina."

In the Spring of 1954, as the French situation became desperate, the Eisenhower Administration sought to persuade other nations with interests in Southeast Asia to engage in a joint undertaking to stave off collapse. On April 4, President Eisenhower sent a letter to Winston Churchill suggesting "united action" on the part of the United States, England, France, the Associated States, Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Philippines. "...The coalition," Mr. Eisenhower wrote, "must be strong and must be willing to join the fight if necessary."

If the forces of the United States were sent to Southeast Asia, the President made it clear that they would go principally for purposes other than ground warfare. He told Churchill, "I do not envisage the need of any appreciable ground forces on your or our part..." Shortly thereafter, in a letter to General Gruenther at NATO, President Eisenhower reaffirmed his intention to avoid commitment of American forces to ground warfare, writing, "Additional ground forces should come from Asiatic and European troops already in the region."

On June 11, 1954, Secretary Dulles, in a speech delivered at Los Angeles, detailed the conditions under which the United States would consider additional help to the French: (1) a request for assistance from the states fighting the Communists; (2) clear assurance (from France) of complete independence to Laos,

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Cambodia, and Vietnam; (3) an indication of concern and support on the part of the United Nations; (4) assurance of collective action by other nations along with the United States; and (5) a guarantee that France would not withdraw from the conflict once a further commitment was extended by others.

The last two conditions laid down by Secretary Dulles were the decisive obstacles to the formulation of any plan for intervention. Negotiations to bring about the formation of a coalition of nations to support the French failed because England was unwilling to participate and because France was unwilling to continue a fight which had gone on for eight years and had cost more than 140,000 French casualties.

#### THE GENEVA CONFERENCE OF 1954

In these circumstances the Geneva Conference opened. On May 6 - the eve of the negotiations on Indochina and of the fall of Dien Bien Phu - Lyndon B. Johnson, Harry S. Truman, and other leading Democrats issued ill-timed statements condemning Administration policy in Southeast Asia on vague grounds. The New York Times of May 7, under the headline, "DEMOCRATS OPEN ALL-OUT ASSAULT ON ADMINISTRATION FOREIGN POLICY," reported:

'An all-out Democratic attack on the Eisenhower Administration's foreign policy, the first such attack since the President took office, was opened tonight.

The effect was to put the Administration on dual notice (1) that the bipartisanship of the last sixteen months was breaking up and (2) that the Congressional Democrats could not be counted upon for unquestioning general support in the field of world affairs.

The article quoted Mr. Johnson as saying:

It is apparent only that American foreign policy has never in all its history suffered such a stunning reversal.



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"We have been caught bluffing by our enemies. Our friends and allies are frightened and wondering, as we do, where we are headed.

"We stand in clear danger of being left naked and alone in a hostile world."

Despite this effort by the loyal opposition to pull the rug out from under the Eisenhower Administration as the critical Geneva Conference opened, the United States attempted to salvage what could be saved.

Representatives of nine governments assembled at Geneva to ring down the curtain on the French empire in Asia - Great Britain, the Soviet Union, France, Communist China, the United States, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (north), The State of Vietnam (south), Cambodia, and Laos. Three similar armistice agreements were concluded relating to Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia, and a declaration was issued.

Besides stipulations on the cessation of hostilities and pledges against resumption, the armistice agreements provided for withdrawal of foreign troops and prohibited Laos, Cambodia, and the two parts of Vietnam from joining any military alliance or granting military bases to foreign powers.

The Geneva Agreements in effect recognized as Communist territory Vietnam north of the 17th parallel and two provinces in northeastern Laos - Phongsaly and Sam-Neua.

Presenting the Agreements to the French Parliament, Premier Mendes France characterized them as "cruel because they sanction cruel facts." They reflected, he declared, "losses already suffered or made inevitable by the military situation."

If anything, the territorial settlement reached at Geneva was better than the non-Communist nations deserved on the basis of the existing military situation.

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Vietnam north of the 17th parallel had already been almost totally occupied by the Viet Minh forces. The treaty provisions formalized this conquest, but they also required the Viet Minh to withdraw from South Vietnam, vast areas of which were under their control. Some 80,000 - 90,000 Viet Minh troops were moved out of South Vietnam in the execution of the agreement. Perhaps 5,000-6,000 melted into the civilian population and remained in violation of the Geneva Agreement.

The territorial arrangements contained in the agreements were, on their face, temporary. North and South Vietnam, like North and South Korea, were ostensibly established for primarily military reasons as zones for the orderly liquidation of hostilities and the beginning of peaceful reconstruction.

The armistice agreement relating to Vietnam reads that the 17th parallel "should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary." The Conference declaration envisaged the reunification of Vietnam, providing for the selection of a government for the entire country by "free general elections" to be held in 1956.

Similarly, the assignment of two northeastern provinces of Laos as sanctuaries for troops of the Communist Pathet Lao not wishing to be demobilized was, by the terms of the agreement, temporary - "pending a political settlement."

The United States did not sign any of the three treaties concluded at Geneva nor the Conference declaration. Nor did South Vietnam.

At Geneva the United States issued a unilateral declaration pledging not to use force to disturb the agreements and warning that renewed aggression in violation of the agreements would be viewed as a threat to international peace and security. At the same time President Eisenhower announced that steps would be taken to establish collective defense against Communist aggression in Southeast Asia.

The attitude of the United States government toward Geneva was summarized by the President, "The agreement contains features which we do not like, but a great deal depends on how they work in practice."

The chief flaw of the Geneva settlement lay in provisions relating to the International Control Commissions, set up to supervise the execution of the agreements. The Commissions, composed of representatives of Canada, India, and Poland, could act only by unanimous vote in cases involving violations of the territory covered by the agreements. A veto in the hands of a Communist representative was an instrument for sabotaging the execution of the agreements.

#### Reaction to Geneva

The negotiations at Geneva produced a flood of criticism of the Eisenhower Administration's foreign policy.

Yet all of the critics flatly opposed the only step which remained to undo the Communist conquest in Indochina - the commitment of American troops to a long and costly war. General Ridgeway estimated that 5 to 10 American combat divisions would have been required "at the outset" to win such a war.

Critic Mike Mansfield said, "...almost all opinions converged on one point: The United States should not become involved alone in a shooting war in Indochina." At another time, he said:

"No, I was never in favor of intervention and I am opposed to it now. I think it would be suicidal. I believe the worst thing that could happen to the U.S. would be to have our forces intervene in Indochina and then bog down in the jungles there..."

Senator John F. Kennedy said:

I am frankly of the belief that no amount of American military assistance in Indochina can conquer an enemy which is everywhere and at the same time nowhere, an enemy of the people which has

the sympathy and covert support of the people....I do not think Indochina can be saved unless the other Asiatic nations...are willing to take their fair part in the struggle....For the United States to intervene unilaterally and to send troops into the most difficult terrain in the world, with the Chinese able to pour in unlimited manpower, would mean that we would face a situation which would be more difficult than even that encountered in Korea. It seems to me it would be a hopeless situation.

Senator Estes Kefauver had this to say:

But if the decision is to be made to intervene, I say this nation needs more than the help of Great Britain, of Australia, of New Zealand, and of France. It must have the moral and physical support, in addition to the Philippines and Thailand, of Burma, Indonesia, Ceylon, Pakistan, and, if not the help, at least the understanding of India.

Senator Hubert Humphrey said, "We have had our bluff called two or three times in the last month. We have been defeated at Geneva." Somewhat illogically, since he opposed military intervention by the United States, Senator Humphrey attributed the "defeat" at Geneva to cuts made by the Eisenhower Administration in the defense budget.

The critics were not in agreement on the basis for their attacks on the Administration. Adlai Stevenson thought the United States was too rigid and inflexible in negotiations. Mike Mansfield thought the United States should not have negotiated at all but should have stayed away from the Geneva Conference, ignoring the fact that such provisions, as that permitting Vietnamese who wished to escape Communist control to move to South Vietnam, were the result of the bargaining effort of the representatives of this nation.

Finally, the critics undermined their case by conceding that the war in Indochina was lost because of French colonialism and not because of anything the United States did or failed to do. Adlai Stevenson made the point when he declared, "Had France...granted genuine independence in orderly, sincere stages to Vietnam, there very likely would have been no war in Indochina..."

The Disputed Election of 1956

The Final Declaration issued at Geneva in 1954 (subscribed to by neither the United States nor South Vietnam) called for free elections to unify all of Vietnam in 1956. Recently Senator Fulbright and others have deplored the fact that the election was not held.

At Geneva the representatives of what was to be South Vietnam

vainly protested against the partition of the country and against the principle of general elections being agreed upon when more than half of the voters would be north of the seventeenth parallel. It vainly asked that the whole territory and population be placed under the control of the United Nations until the reestablishment of peace and security would permit the holding of really free general elections.

The reasons for the refusal of South Vietnam to acquiesce in the holding of the election were stated by Prime Minister Diem on July 16, 1955:

We did not sign the Geneva Agreements. We are not bound in any way by these agreements entered into against the will of the Vietnamese people. Our policy is a policy of peace, but nothing will divert us from our goal: the unity of our country -- a unity in freedom and not in slavery...

We do not reject the principle of elections as a peaceful and democratic means to achieve unity. But elections can be one of the foundations of true democracy only on the condition that they are absolutely free. And we shall be skeptical about the possibility of achieving the conditions of free elections in the North under the regime of oppression carried on by the Viet Minh...

There was clearly no legal obligation on the government of South Vietnam to abide by the terms of the Final Declaration. The position of South Vietnam on this point was sustained by the United Kingdom, one of the co-chairmen of the Geneva Conference in the following statement:

Her Majesty's government has always regarded it as desirable that these elections should be held and has advised the Government of the Republic of Vietnam to enter into consultations with the Viet Minh authorities in order to ensure that all the necessary conditions obtained for a free expression of the national will as a preliminary to holding free general elections by secret ballot. Nevertheless, Her Majesty's government does not agree that (South Vietnam) is legally obliged to follow the course....It may be recalled that, at the final session of the

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Geneva Conference on Indo-China...the Vietnamese government formally protested 'against the hasty conclusion of the Armistice Agreements by the French and Viet Minh High Commands only'...and 'against the fact that the French High Command was pleased to take the right, without a preliminary agreement of the delegation of (South Vietnam) to set the date of future elections.

Among the staunchest opponents of the holding of the 1956 election was Senator John F. Kennedy of Massachusetts. He issued:

...a plea that the United States never give its approval to the early nationwide elections called for by the Geneva Agreement of 1954. Neither the United States nor Free Vietnam was a party to that agreement - and neither the United States nor Free Vietnam is ever going to be a party to an election obviously stacked and subverted in advance, urged upon us by those who have already broken their own pledges under the agreement they now seek to enforce.

Even Hans Morgenthau spoke against action to carry out the provisions of the Geneva Declaration relating to elections:

Free elections are very subtle instruments which require a dedication to certain moral values and the existence of certain moral conditions which are by no means prevalent throughout the world, and certainly not prevalent in either North or South Vietnam.

Conditions in South Vietnam 1954 - 1960

As South Vietnam began its existence, the prospects for its survival were minimal. Independence was thrust upon a people without political experience and without political leadership. It had no sense of nationhood. It had no industry. And, by the Geneva declaration, it seemed doomed to being swallowed up by the Communist rulers of North Vietnam in two years.

Some of the difficulties facing the newly selected Prime Minister Ngo Dinh Diem were outlined by one observer in these words,

The circumstances under which the man came to power were unbelievable. He faced the opposition of the Communists...he also had to deal with the open hostility of French military men and the remnants of the French colonial service, who regarded him as anti-French, and who expected him to last only a few weeks at the most. Then, as a consequence of a provision of the Geneva Accords, authorizing free movement between the north and south zones for a limited period, more than 850,000 refugees came into South Vietnam from the Communist North Vietnam during the next 300 days, to be fed, clothed, and housed. In addition, he found that his 'full powers, civil and military,' an extraordinary grant which Bao Dai had conceded him as a condition of his acceptance of office, existed principally on paper.

Yet when the Eisenhower Administration left office, South Vietnam had a stable and established government.

Senator John F. Kennedy called the development "a near miracle." In his book, Strategy of Peace, published in 1960, he said:

...in what everyone thought was the hour of total Communist triumph, we saw a near miracle take place... Today that brave little state /\_South Vietnam\_/ is working in free and friendly association with the United States, whose economic and military aid has, in conditions of independence, proved effective.

Senator Mike Mansfield, on February 26, 1960, reported as Chairman of the Subcommittee on State Department Organization and Public Affairs of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations:

By any measure Vietnam has made great progress under President Ngo Dinh Diem in the improvement of internal security, in the creation of the forms and institutions of popularly responsible government where before few existed, and in the advancement of the welfare of the people of Vietnam. The U.S. aid program has been an important factor in that progress. It is still an important factor.

The State Department's White Paper of December 1961, A Threat to the Peace, contains the following analysis of progress in South Vietnam:

The years 1956 to 1960 produced something close to an economic miracle in South Vietnam. Food production rose an average of 7 percent a year and prewar levels were achieved and passed. While per capita food production in the North was 10 percent lower in 1960 than it had been in 1956, it was 20 percent higher in the South. The output of textiles in the South jumped in only one year from 68 million meters (in 1958) to 83 million meters. Sugar production in the same one-year span increased more than 100 percent, from 25,000 metric tons to 58,000 metric tons.

Despite the vastly larger industrial plant inherited by the North when Vietnam was partitioned, gross national product is considerably larger in the South. In 1960 it was estimated at \$110 per person in the South and \$70 in the North. Foreigners who have visited both North and South testify to the higher living standards and much greater availability of consumer goods in the latter.

The record of South Vietnam in these recent years is written in services and in improved welfare as well as in cold economic indices. A massive resettlement program effectively integrated the 900,000 refugees from the North into the economic and social fabric of the South. An agrarian reform program was designed to give 300,000 tenant farmers a chance to buy the land they work for a modest price. Under the Government's agricultural credit program aimed at freeing the farmers from the hands of usurers, loans to peasant families increased fivefold between 1957 and 1959.

Thousands of new schoolrooms were built and the elementary school population in South Vietnam increased from 400,000 in 1956 to 1,500,000 in 1960. A rural health program installed simple dispensaries in half of South Vietnam's



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6,000 villages and hamlets. An elaborate malaria eradication program was launched to rid Vietnam of its most important infectious disease. Doctors and nurses went into training in South Vietnam and abroad to serve their people's health needs.

This is a part, a very small part, of the setting against which the Viet Cong launched their campaign of armed action, subversion, and terror against South Vietnam. It is a record of progress over a few brief years equalled by few young countries.

Secretary McNamara added his testimony on March 26, 1964:

The U.S....provided help - largely economic.

On the basis of this assistance and the brave, sustained efforts of the South Vietnamese people, the 5 years from 1954 to 1959 gave concrete evidence that South Vietnam was becoming a success story. By the end of this period, 140,000 landless peasant families had been given land under an agrarian reform program; the transportation system had been almost entirely rebuilt; rice production had reached the pre-war annual average of 3.5 million metric tons - and leaped to over 5 million in 1960; rubber production had exceeded prewar totals; and construction was under way on several medium-size manufacturing plants, thus beginning the development of a base for industrial growth.

In addition to such economic progress, school enrollments had tripled, the number of primary school teachers had increased from 30,000 to 90,000, and almost 3,000 medical aid stations and maternity clinics had been established throughout the country. And the South Vietnamese Government had gone far toward creating an effective apparatus for the administration of the nation. A National Institute of Administration had been established with our technical and financial assistance - a center for the training of a new generation of civil servants oriented toward careers of public service as opposed to the colonial concept of public rule.

The progress which, by all this testimony, was made in South Vietnam between 1955 and 1960, was due in no small part to the assistance of the United States.

Without the support of the United States, South Vietnam would have been stillborn. During fiscal years 1955 through 1961, 2.3 billion dollars -

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- 63 per cent of it for economic purposes - was provided by the Eisenhower Administration. Technical assistance was given on a large scale to increase and diversify the output of the country's economy and to spur the achievement of far-reaching social reforms, notably in the fields of education and diffusion of land ownership.

But a viable South Vietnam also required security from outside aggression and from terrorism and guerilla activities within the country. To increase security, the Eisenhower Administration proceeded promptly to form a regional defense organization, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization, and to bring South Vietnam, as well as Laos and Cambodia, within its protective cover.

Specifically to meet the threat of infiltration from North Vietnam and the depredations of guerillas in the South, the United States provided military equipment and training to the forces of South Vietnam.

There can be no question that only the help of the United States made possible the survival of South Vietnam. Without it, everything south of the 17th parallel would have fallen to the Communists a decade ago.

#### NO COMMITMENT OF TROOPS BY EISENHOWER

There is no merit in President Johnson's repeated explanation of the nation's present military involvement in Vietnam as the result of President Eisenhower's letter of October 23, 1954 to Prime Minister Diem. This letter, as Secretary McNamara admitted on March 26, 1964, was in response to a request for "economic assistance." It promised American help for the resettlement of refugees from North Vietnam and an exploration of "ways and means to permit our aid...to make a greater contribution to the welfare and stability of the Government of Vietnam." "...in the event such aid were supplied," President Eisenhower wrote, the United States

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would expect "assurances as to the standards of performance." The purpose of this conditional offer, he said, was "...to assist the Government of Vietnam in developing and maintaining a strong, viable state, capable of resisting attempted subversion or aggression through military means." This was the extent of the commitment made in this letter.

Any legal obligation which the United States might have to use its military force in defense of South Vietnam would result from the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty signed at Manila on September 8, 1954.

The framers of this Treaty deliberately rejected the kind of automatic commitment incorporated in the NATO agreement summarized in the principle "an attack upon one is an attack upon all," requiring a military response by all parties to aggression against any signatory.

Article IV of the Southeast Asia Collective Defense Treaty clearly reserves to each signatory the right to determine the nature of its response to armed aggression and does not commit in advance any signatory to use its armed forces to deal with the aggressor.

Recognizing this fact, the Kennedy Administration did not use American forces to repel Communist aggression in Laos. The legal commitment of the United States to South Vietnam is the same as its commitment to Laos. Both of these countries of Southeast Asia were brought under the protection of SEATO.

The New York Times of August 19, 1965 correctly stated the case when it said, "The shift from military assistance and combat advice to direct participation by American combat troops in the Vietnamese war has...been a unilateral American decision...by President Johnson."

17.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COMMUNIST OFFENSIVE

Although the government of South Vietnam never established unchallenged authority in the entire countryside, a period of relative peace and stability extended from 1955 to 1959. Late in the latter year the tempo of guerrilla attacks began to assume significant proportions.

During 1960 the armed forces of the Viet Cong began to increase from the level of 3000 at the beginning of the year. During this year the Viet Cong assassinated or kidnapped more than 2000 people -- military and civilian. Acts of terrorism were directed particularly against local officials in rural areas to leave the countryside leaderless.

The signal from North Vietnam for intensification of the conflict came on September 10, 1960 at the Third Congress of the Communist Party of North Vietnam with a call for the liberation of the south from the "rule of the U.S. imperialists and their henchmen." In December the National Front for Liberation of South Vietnam was formed by Hanoi.

### III. THE KENNEDY ADMINISTRATION

The Democratic Administration which took office in January of 1961 was confronted not only with problems in South Vietnam but with far more acute difficulties in the neighboring nation of Laos. In Vietnam sporadic guerilla attacks were going on. In Laos, Communist Pathet Lao forces were engaged in a full-scale offensive that threatened the government of Premier Boun Oum.

#### Laos

Recognizing the seriousness of the situation in Laos, President Kennedy addressed himself to this subject in a news conference on March 15, 1961.

The President said:

...recent attacks by rebel forces indicate that a small minority backed by personnel and supplies from outside is seeking to prevent the establishment of a neutral and independent country (of Laos). We are determined to support the government and the people of Laos in resisting this attempt.

On March 23 the President warned, "...if there is to be a peaceful solution, there must be a cessation of the present armed attacks by externally supported Communists...No one should doubt our resolution on this point...all members of SEATO have undertaken special treaty responsibilities towards an aggression in Laos."

Sixteen months later the government of the United States acquiesced in a settlement which terminated any responsibility which the SEATO powers had toward Laos and imposed on that country a coalition government including Communist representation. Acceptance of this settlement by the government of Laos which enjoyed recognition by the United States was brought about by suspension of American aid.

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Although Government spokesmen said that the United States would not negotiate on the subject of Laos until a cease-fire was in effect, on May 16, 1961 Secretary Rusk appeared at the opening of the Geneva Conference ready to negotiate. A cease-fire had, it is true, been proclaimed on May 3, but the Communists kept on fighting. How spurious the announced cessation of hostilities was can be judged from the fact that the United States on May 30 submitted to the conferees at Geneva a list of 38 Communist breaches of the cease-fire agreement. Throughout the fourteen months of the Geneva Conference, violations continued. On May 7, 1962, the Pathet Lao captured the city of Nam Tha after a siege of four months. By May 12, the Communist forces completed the occupation of Northwest Laos in a 100-mile advance beyond the cease-fire line that compelled the United States to send 5000 military personnel to Thailand because of the "grave threat" to that country.

The United States continued to negotiate at Geneva. It no longer even protested violations of the cease-fire.

At the outset of the Geneva Conference on May 17, 1961, Secretary Rusk said that the United States would insist on "effective controls, effectively applied to maintain a genuinely independent Laos." As a "yardstick which will influence the attitude of the United States toward the work of this conference", he laid down five principles dealing with the operation of the body which would supervise

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the execution of the agreement. They were inspired by unhappy experience with the international control commissions established to police the Geneva Agreements of 1954.

In summary, Secretary Rusk's principles boiled down to these: that no member of the supervisory commission should possess a veto power by which it might prevent the execution of decisions of the majority of the commission and that the commission must enjoy full freedom of action and of movement throughout the territory in which it was to function.

The Declaration and Protocol on Neutrality in Laos, signed July 21, 1962 (the anniversary of the 1954 Geneva Agreement) proclaimed the neutrality of Laos, required the withdrawal of foreign troops, established a control commission composed of Poland, India, and Canada, but it showed no trace of the principles laid down by Secretary Rusk when the Conference opened. Each member of the Control Commission was to possess the power to veto any decision except a decision to initiate an investigation.

Six months before the Geneva Agreement of 1962 was signed, the State Department issued an anguished complaint about the failure of the Control Commission in Vietnam to function in dealing with 1200 incidents of alleged Communist violation of the 1954 Agreement.

Nevertheless, Averall Harriman called the 1962 Agreement "a good agreement - better than I thought we would

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work out."

Mr. Harriman's appraisal makes interesting reading in the light of the following remarks of Secretary Rusk two years later on June 14, 1964:

What happened? The non-Communist nations complied with the agreements. North Vietnam and its Pathet Lao puppets did not. We promptly withdrew our 600-man military aid mission. North Vietnam kept several thousand troops and military technicians in Laos. North Vietnamese cadres are the backbone of almost every Pathet Lao battalion. This was, and is, of course, a major violation of the Geneva accords.

Later, North Vietnam sent additional forces back into Laos - some of them in organized battalions- a second major violation.

The North Vietnamese have continued to use, and improve, the corridor through Laos to reinforce and supply the Viet Cong in South Vietnam - a third major violation.

The Communists have continued to ship arms into Laos as well as through it - another major violation.

The Pathet Lao and the North Vietnamese Communists have compounded these international felonies by denials that they were committing them.

But there was another major violation which they could not deny. They barred freedom of access to the areas under their control, both to the Lao Government and to the International Control Commission. The Royal Lao Government, on the other hand, opened the areas under its control to access not only by the ICC but by all Lao factions.

The Communists repeatedly fired at personnel and aircraft on legitimate missions under the authority of the Royal Lao Government. They even fired on ICC helicopters. They repeatedly violated the cease-fire agreement. And this spring they launched an assault on the neutral-



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the Plaine des Jarres, where they had been since early 1961.

This, in bare summary, is the Communist record of aggression, bad faith, and deception in Laos.

Laos today is ripe for picking by the Communists whenever they choose to use the force necessary to take over the entire country.

Communist control of large areas of Laos has had a direct bearing on military operations in South Vietnam. The State Department noted that Laos "provides not only a route into South Vietnam but also a safe haven from which Viet Cong units operate." It also asserted that "The pace of infiltration of officers and men has jumped markedly since Pathet Lao victories in Laos have assured a relatively safe corridor through that country into western South Vietnam.

The importance of Laos arises less from its military significance, however, than from the fact that it tested the resoluteness of the government of the United States. When the Administration retreated repeatedly from its announced positions in the case of Laos, the Communists might well have concluded that the United States would in time back down in South Vietnam.

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Averell Harriman drew a distinction between the two nations, pointing out that Laos was land-locked and could be defended only by ground forces. "In Vietnam, on the other hand," he said in a statement that has an ironic ring today,

a decision to assist the Republic of Vietnam to defend itself against the sort of attack being waged in that country would not involve the deployment of United States combat forces and would not require the occupation of foreign territory by United States or other Western forces.

#### VIETNAM

In May of 1961 Vice President Johnson was sent to Vietnam. There he lavished praise on Prime Minister Diem, comparing his host to Washington, Jackson, Wilson, Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Winston Churchill. He assured Diem that the United States was with him "all the way."

The result of the Vice President's trip was a substantial increase in American aid for military, economic, and social purposes. American manpower, the Vice President reported, was not needed.

The Vice President's trip to Vietnam was the first of several by important Administration figures. It set a pattern which was to be followed without variation by the others - a rash of optimistic statements

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on the status and future prospects of the military struggle and an extension of American involvement either in the form of aid or manpower or both.

The year 1961 saw the development of the conflict in Vietnam from covert guerilla action to open, if still small-scale, war. In that year for the first time the Viet Cong committed forces of battalion size to combat. For the first time they launched an attack on a community as important as a provincial capital. The infiltration of Communist troops from the north, facilitated by unchallenged Communist control of eastern Laos, increased. By the end of 1961, the State Department estimated that between 8,000 and 12,000 regular Viet Cong troops were in South Vietnam - at least double the number present there one year earlier. The United States doubled its forces of military advisors in South Vietnam from fewer than 700 stationed there when President Eisenhower left office to 1,364.

In the period 1961 to 1963 the number of American troops in South Vietnam grew from 1,364 to 16,575. The amount of aid, military and economic, was increased substantially, although the exact figures for military aid are classified after fiscal year 1962.

In the late summer and fall of 1963, the internal crisis in South Vietnam arising from conflict between the Diem regime and the Buddhists produced a deterioration of the military situation and a decision by the United States government to encourage a change of horses. American aid

was cut back. Official statements indicating lack of confidence in the Diem government and calling for a change of personnel and policy were issued. Diem was removed in a military coup and was assassinated along with his brother Nhu.

There is general agreement now that the coup of November 1963 led to chaos in South Vietnam and resulted in substantial Viet Cong gains.

Strangely, the setbacks that occurred at the end of 1963 and the beginning of 1964 began only one month after Secretary McNamara and General Taylor returned from South Vietnam with an optimistic report. So strong was their optimism that an immediate reduction of the American force in South Vietnam by 1000 men was announced and the prediction was made that virtually all American troops would be withdrawn by the end of 1965.

The text of the White House announcement of October 2, 1963 follows:

Major U.S. assistance in support of this military effort is needed only until the insurgency has been suppressed or until the national security forces of the Government of South Vietnam are capable of suppressing it. Secretary McNamara and General Taylor reported their judgment that the major part of the U.S. military task can be completed by the end of 1965, although there may be a continuing requirement for a limited number of U.S. training personnel. They reported that by the end of this year, the U.S. program for training Vietnamese should have progressed to the point where 1,000 U.S. military personnel assigned to South Vietnam can be withdrawn.

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#### IV. THE JOHNSON ADMINISTRATION

The Administration of Lyndon Johnson has greatly increased the involvement of American military forces, raising the number of troops from 16,000 to 125,000 with further increases anticipated. In February of 1965, it began bombing targets in North Vietnam. In spite of protestations to the contrary, it is changing the nature of American participation in the war by committing substantial numbers of American troop units to ground combat with the Viet Cong.

At the same time the Johnson Administration has taken extraordinary steps to bring about negotiations to end the fighting. It has announced its willingness to enter unconditional negotiations. It suspended bombing of North Vietnam for six days. It has blessed the efforts of other nations and of public and private intermediaries to bring about a conference to discuss peace. It has offered "a billion dollar American investment" for the regional development of Southeast Asia including the development of the Mekong River - a plan similar to one proposed by the Eisenhower Administration ten years ago.

#### DE-ESCALATION OF THE OBJECTIVE OF THE UNITED STATES

As the military effort of the United States in Vietnam has burgeoned, the pronouncements of President Johnson defining the objective of the United States have been progressively watered down.

On December 31, 1963, the President, in a letter to General Duong Van Minh, said the objective was "achieving victory." On July 28, 1965, the President said "our goal...is...to convince the Communists that we cannot be defeated by force of arms."

In more specific terms, the President on April 20, 1964 expressed willingness to accept "any settlement which assures the independence of South Vietnam and its freedom to seek help for its protection." His speech of April 7, 1965 at Johns Hopkins University seemed to discard the freedom of South Vietnam to seek help for its protection, for on that occasion the President defined the objective in contradictory terms as "an independent South Vietnam - securely guaranteed and able to shape its own relationships to all others - free from outside interference - tied to no alliance - a military base for no other country." Clearly South Vietnam would not have freedom to shape its relationship to other countries if it were barred from ties with alliances or from providing a military base to another country. Experience suggests that without an ally South Vietnam would not be securely guaranteed.

Finally, on July 28, 1965 the President seemed to discard the independence of South Vietnam as an objective. Declaring that the "purposes" of the 1954 Geneva Agreements "are still our own," he asserted that "the people of South Vietnam shall have the right to shape their own destiny in free elections - in the South or throughout all Vietnam under international supervision..." This raises the disquieting possibility of accepting now in Vietnam the type of election which the United States rejected a decade ago - an election which, in the words of John F. Kennedy, would be "stacked and subverted in advance...."

#### MISCALCULATION

The President now tells the nation, "This is really war."

To what degree miscalculation on the part of the enemy has brought about this state of affairs, no one can be sure. It is clear, however, that many of the words and deeds of the past four years could only have

encouraged underestimation of the constancy and firmness of the nation in the pursuit of its foreign policy goals.

The whole handling of the problem of Laos could have no result other than the conclusion that the United States would not match its words with deeds.

The Administration said that it would not permit aggression against Laos to succeed, but it did.

The Administration said that it would not begin negotiating about Laos until a cease-fire had been put into effect, but it did.

The Administration indicated that it would not accept a peace settlement in Laos which granted a veto to any member of the Commission established to supervise the peace, but it did.

Miscalculation was the natural result of the withdrawal of American backing for the Diem government. For the United States had pledged its support to Diem "all the way," in Lyndon Johnson's phrase in 1961. Abrupt reversal of policy leading to the overthrow of the leader whom the government of the United States had been ardently supporting and whose downfall was a major Viet Cong objective could appear only as evidence of weakening of the resolve of this nation. Whether the error was the commitment to support Diem "all the way" or connivance in Diem's downfall, the net effect was to cast doubt on the value and durability of a pledge of support by the United States.

Miscalculation was encouraged by President Johnson's campaign oratory of 1964. In order to make his opponent appear reckless and trigger-happy, the President in several statements set limits to American participation in the Vietnamese conflict. For example, on August 12, 1964, he said:

Some others are eager to enlarge the conflict. They call upon us to supply American boys to do the job that Asian boys should do.

Again, on August 29, the President declared:

I have had advice to load our planes with bombs and to drop them on certain areas that I think would enlarge the war, and result in our committing a good many American boys to fighting a war that I think ought to be fought by the boys of Asia to help protect their own land. And for that reason, I haven't chosen to enlarge the war.

In Hanoi and Peiping all this could be interpreted only as an assurance that they need not fear fuller use of the power of the United States in Vietnam beyond the type of assistance provided to the South Vietnamese in the summer of 1964.

"Perhaps," Secretary Rusk was quoted in the New York Times as saying, "the Communist world misunderstood our Presidential campaign." Perhaps, indeed, it did. But whose fault was that?

Miscalculation is encouraged by threats that are not followed up by appropriate action.

Such was the case when President Johnson on February 21, 1964 said, "Those engaged in external direction and supply [in Vietnam] would do well to remember that this type of aggression is a deeply dangerous game." This remark was advertised as a major foreign policy declaration by White House aides who called the words "dangerous game" highly significant. The impression was given to the press that the President was suggesting a strike at North Vietnam. But nothing happened. The Communists did not slow down, and the Administration did nothing to demonstrate the danger in their game.

In June of 1964 at Honolulu, Secretary Rusk asked newsmen to report that the U.S. commitment to Vietnam was unlimited, comparable with West Berlin. President Johnson declared, "If a nation is to keep its freedom, it must be prepared to risk war. When necessary, we will take that risk." These threats were followed up by the campaign oratory which set limits to



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the American commitment by appearing to rule out action against North Vietnam and any extension of the American role in combat.

LACK OF CANDOR ON THE PART OF THE ADMINISTRATION

Miscalculation is encouraged - and the American people are confused - when the Administration glosses over a messy situation with optimistic pronouncements and predictions.

Consider such statements as the following:

Lyndon B. Johnson

We do not have a problem in Laos. (Feb. 11, 1964)

Robert S. McNamara

Actions taken there have proved effective and will prove more effective as time goes on. (Jan. 17, 1962)

Progress in the last eight to ten weeks has been great... The government has asked only for logistical support... Nothing but progress and hopeful indications of further progress in the future. (May 12, 1962)

Our military assistance to Vietnam is paying off. I continue to be encouraged. There are many signs indicating progress. (July 25, 1962)

There is a "new feeling of confidence" that victory is possible in South Vietnam.... (Jan. 31, 1963)

The major part of the United States military task can be completed by the end of 1965, although there may be continuing requirement for a limited number of United States training personnel... (Oct. 2, 1963)

We have every reason to believe that U.S. military plans will be successful in 1964. (Dec. 12, 1963)

With these further measures, we felt that a start could be made in reducing the number of United States military personnel in Vietnam as their training missions were completed. Accordingly, we announced that about 1,000 men were to be withdrawn by the end of 1963, and expressed the hope that the major part of the United States military task could be completed by the end of 1965, although we recognized that there might be a continuing requirement for a limited number of United States advisory personnel. (Jan. 30, 1964)

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We are confident these plans point the way to victory.  
(Mar. 1964)

It would be tedious to detail the facts that showed how remote each of these pronouncements was from grim reality. One example will suffice. Secretary Rusk declared in the course of a visit to Vietnam on April 20, 1964, that things were showing "steady improvment." The headline in the New York Times two days later read, "REDS INFLICT HEAVIEST TOLL ON SOUTH VIETNAM ARMY." It had been the bloodiest week of the war, the Times reported, with 1,000 Vietnamese Government and 23 American casualties.

Now once again, the public is being told by the White House that there is reason for "cautious optimism."

Neither the Congress nor the public is being accurately and fully informed about the nation's involvement in Vietnam. American military personnel were called advisers long after they became combatants. Today their "primary mission", the nation is told, "is to secure and safeguard important military installations like the air base at Da Nang..."

The President announced on July 28 that the stationing of 125,000 American troops in Vietnam did "not imply any change in policy whatever."

Yet, Secretary McNamara testified on August 4, 1965, "The principal role of U.S. ground combat forces will be to supplement this reserve of the South Vietnamese Army in support of the front line forces of the South Vietnamese Army."

The able Saigon correspondent of the Los Angeles Times, Jack Foisie, has written:

Although the decision to commit large-scale American combat units in Vietnam is apparent, and is obvious to the enemy through the buildup of logistical bases on the central coast, authoriries in Washington try to pretend that we really are not committed to land warfare in Asia, to casualties as large or larger than suffered during the Korean war. (L.A. Times July 25, 1965)

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As the military effort of the United States was stepped up, adequate funds for its support were not requested of the Congress. Now an attempt to hid the cost is made by asking for added funds in two installments - one now, the other in January of 1966.

The figures that are fed to the press and the public by the Administration contradict each other and surpass belief. In June of 1965, Secretary Rusk gave a figure for South Vietnamese casualties since 1960 that was 50 per cent higher than the figure General Wheeler gave one month earlier. It is hard to believe that casualties in one month in 1965 increased so dramatically. It is hard, too, to accept estimates of Viet Cong combat deaths which indicate that 20 to 25 per cent of the estimated Viet Cong military strength was wiped out in each of two successive recent years.

The astute correspondent of the Washington Post, Howard Margolies, after surveying casualty figures released by the Administration, concludes:

The impression all this leaves is that the publicly released statistics are more a selection of numbers intended to paint a picture that supports whatever the official view is at the moment than a realistic indication of how things are going.

The greatest shortage which the Vietnamese war has so far produced is a shortage of candor and accuracy.

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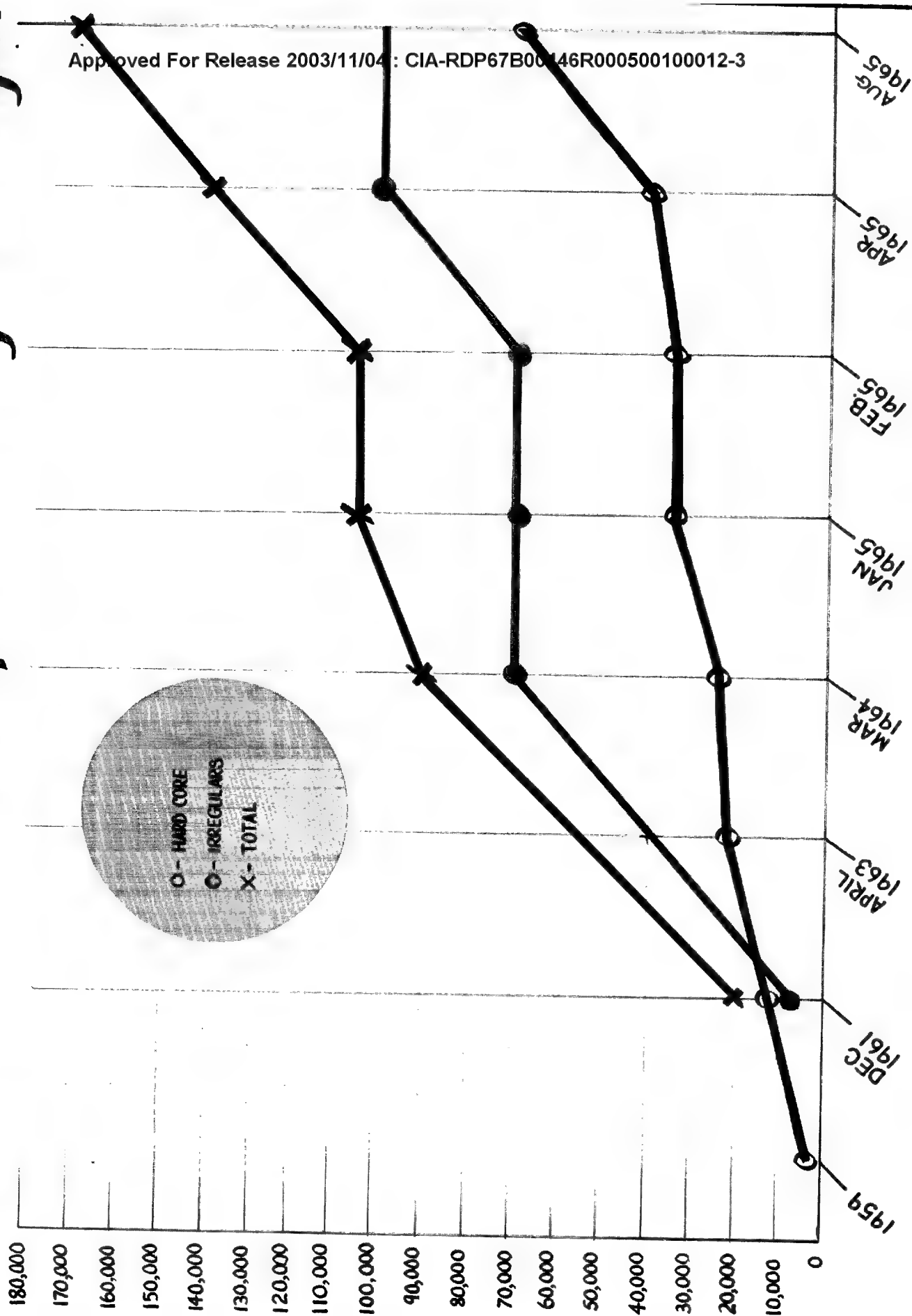
The nation, by the President's admission, is now engaged in a war. All Americans must support whatever action is needed to put a stop to Communist aggression and to make safe the freedom and independence of South Vietnam.

Criticism of Administration actions, when well-founded, is not inconsistent with support of this objective nor of the methods needed to attain it. Indeed, such criticism can help in the attainment of the nation's objective without unnecessary loss or delay.

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# U.S. Govt Estimate of Viet Cong Strength

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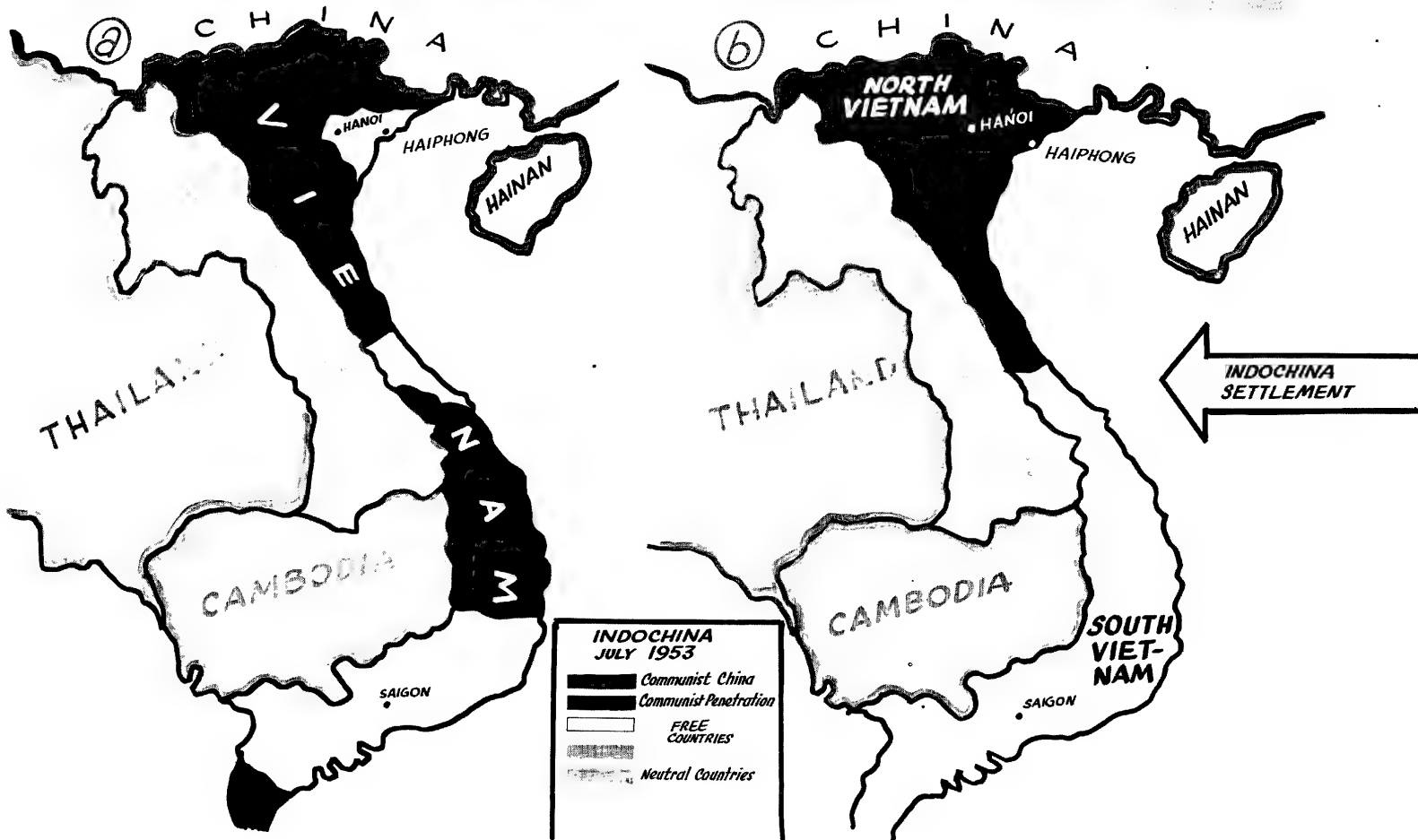


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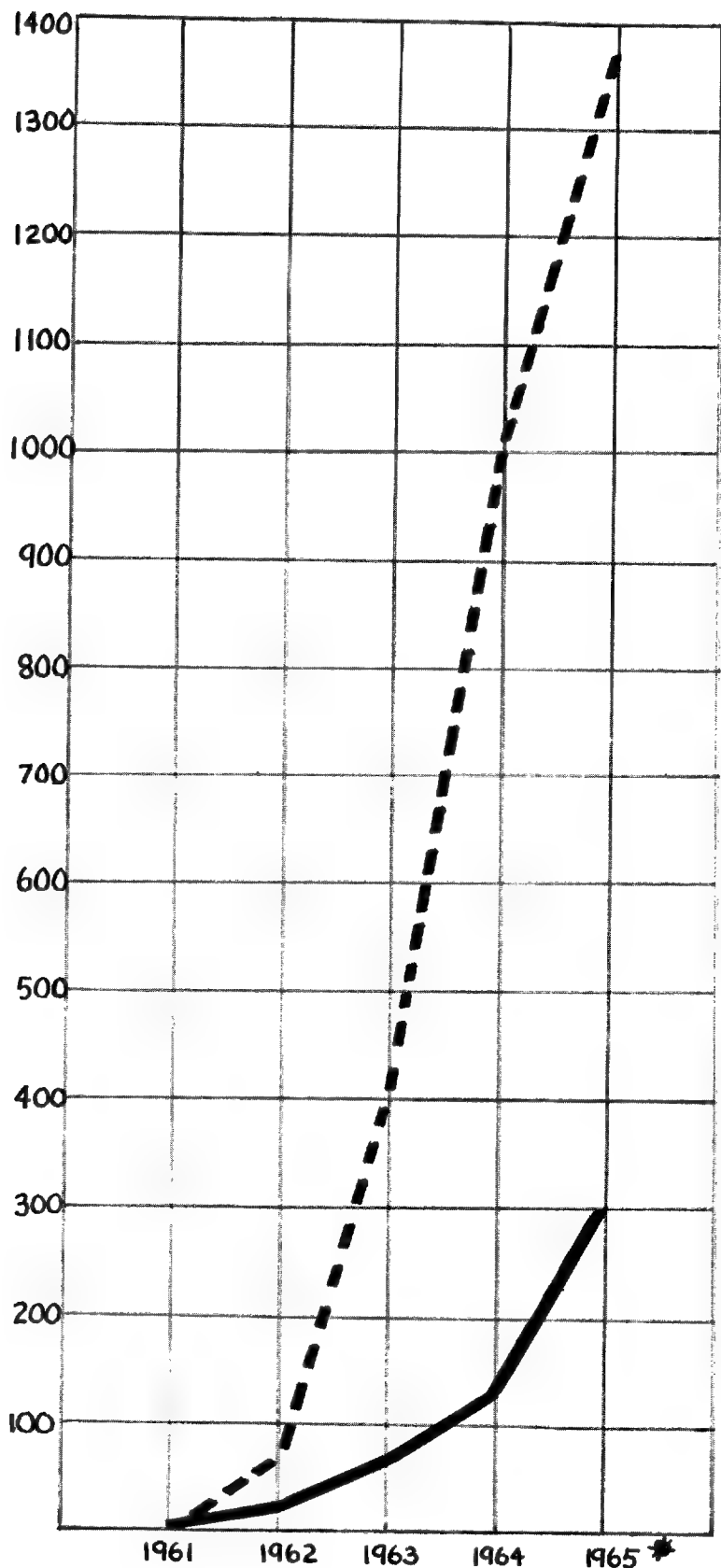
# **AREAS UNDER COMMUNIST CONTROL IN VIETNAM**

a) WHEN EISENHOWER ADMINISTRATION TOOK OFFICE

b) AFTER GENEVA CONFERENCE OF 1954



# U.S. COMBAT CASUALTIES IN VIET NAM



	DEATHS	WOUNDED
1961	1	1
1962	31	74
1963	77	411
1964	142	1,038
1965	300	1,391
(as of Aug 9)		

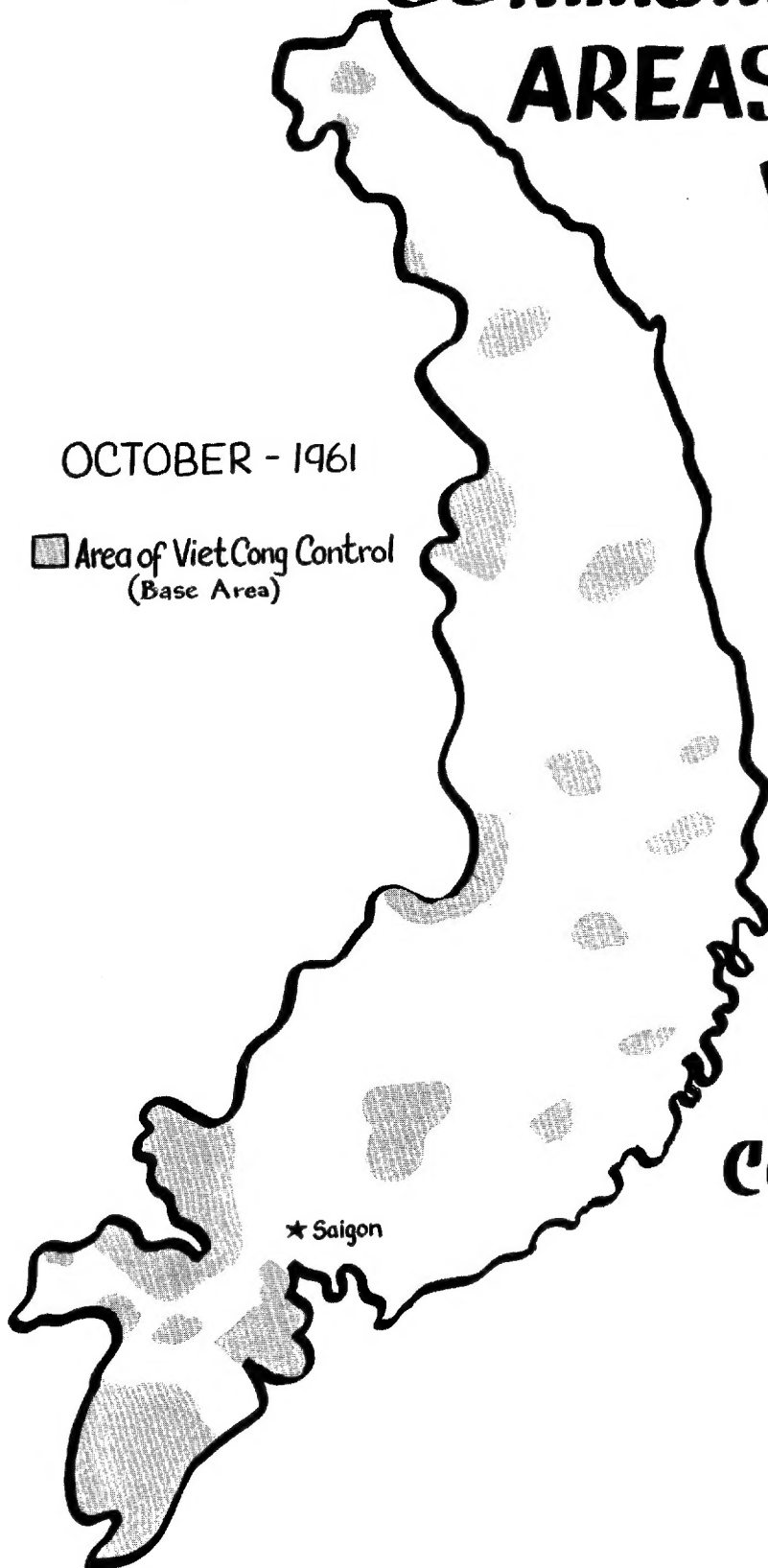
----- wounded  
 \_\_\_\_\_ deaths

\* As of August 9, 1965

# COMMUNIST CONTROLLED AREAS IN SOUTH VIET NAM

OCTOBER - 1961

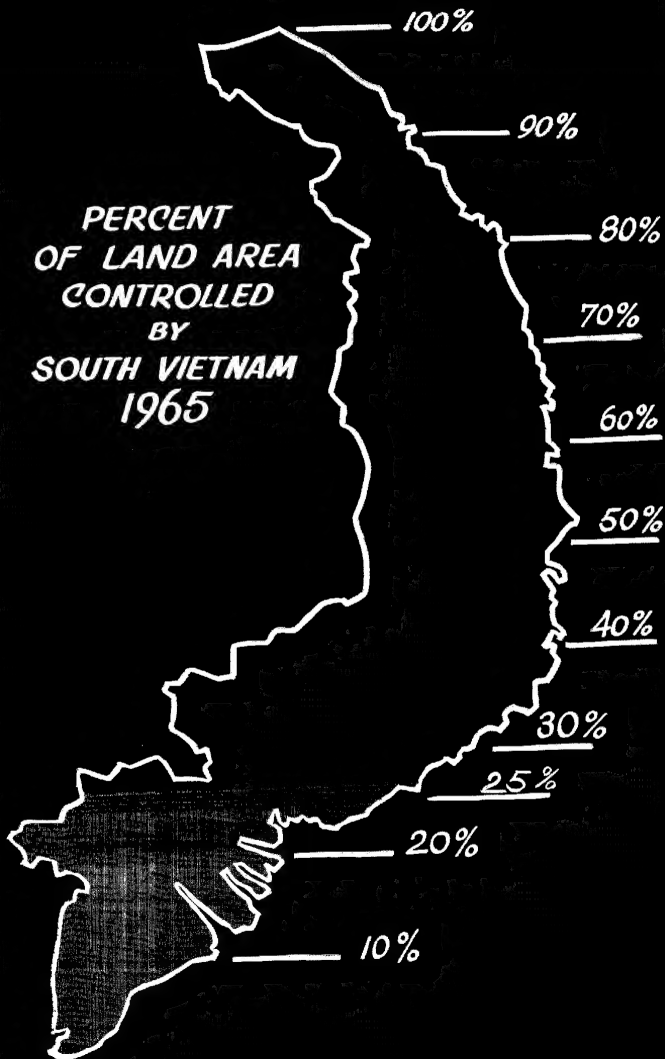
■ Area of Viet Cong Control  
(Base Area)



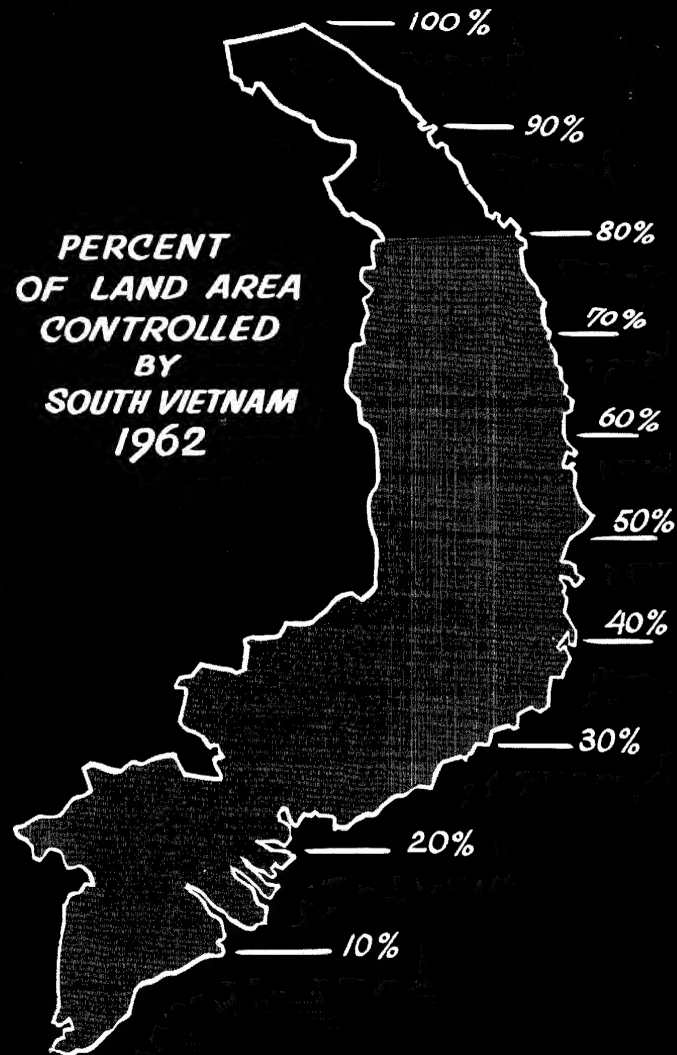
★ Saigon

**THE MAPS SHOWING  
AREAS OF VIET CONG  
CONTROL IN 1964 AND  
1965 ARE CLASSIFIED  
AS CONFIDENTIAL BY  
THE DEPARTMENT OF  
DEFENSE. THEY  
SHOW SUBSTANTIAL  
INCREASES IN THE  
AREAS UNDER VIET  
CONG CONTROL.**

**PERCENT  
OF LAND AREA  
CONTROLLED  
BY  
SOUTH VIETNAM  
1965**



**PERCENT  
OF LAND AREA  
CONTROLLED  
BY  
SOUTH VIETNAM  
1962**





# U.S. MILITARY & ECONOMIC AID TO SOUTH VIETNAM

IN BILLIONS  
OF DOLLARS

